

VZCZCXRO1450
PP RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHDK #0188 0501535
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 191535Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0043
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS DAKAR 000188

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL AND INR/AA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [SG](#)
SUBJECT: SENEGAL: HESITANT REFUGEES RETURN TO MAURITANIA

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On January 29, a group of 101 Mauritanian refugees returned home voluntarily under the auspices of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). These refugees have been living in Senegal since being deported in 1989 by the Government of Mauritania. While some refugee leaders have criticized the repatriation as "precipitated," it seems that both governments are looking for a definitive settlement of this difficult issue. End summary.

Precipitated Return

¶2. (SBU) The first group of Mauritians to return came from the Dagana and Thiabakh refugee camps in Senegal and they used town of Rosso as their crossing point. However, Mamadou Wane, a member of the Directorate of Mauritanian Refugees, has criticized the repatriation operation as being precipitated and without guarantees for those returning home. Yet, not all groups agree with this assessment as Wane failed to obtain the support of the leading Senegalese human rights NGO Raddho (African Rally for Human Rights) whose leaders told Embassy that they prefer to watch the evolution of the repatriation process before making any judgment. Moustapha Toure, spokesperson of CARESMA (Coordination of Associations of Mauritanian Refugees in Senegal and Mali) alleged that Wane is a member of the FLAM (African Mauritanian Liberation Front) who tried unsuccessfully to get the refugees to boycott the repatriation program.

¶3. (SBU) In a February 8 meeting with Poloff, the UNHCR representative in Senegal expressed optimism, indicating nine hundred people are already in line for the next repatriation and that fifteen thousand have agreed to participate in the program. She regrets however, that the process is slow due to the Mauritanian authorities' insistence on organizing the returns based on the region of origin of the returnees. She indicated that the Mauritanian authorities have identified Braknar as the next area to be settled by returnees and an evaluation meeting in Mauritania on February 19 will be a "lessons learned" from the first repatriation. She hopes that the repatriation will be concluded this year so that a reintegration program can begin.

Comment

¶4. (SBU) A Senegalese journalist based in the River Valley area told Embassy "many refugees are hesitant, and generally worried about what the economic future holds for them in Mauritania." This may prevent a massive return in the early stages of the process. However, Senegalese authorities are accompanying the process with diplomatic support and Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade has already indicated that those who do not wish to return to Mauritania would be granted Senegalese nationality.
SMITH